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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000695

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SUBJECT: NDI'S ACTIVITIES AND THINKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS
AFTER THE ELECTIONS

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, Reasons 1.4 (b),(d)

(C) Key Points

-- NDI reps briefed Ambassador May 30 on their recent two-day forum to promote the role of women in the transition to democracy, including NDI's plan to organize candidate debates and to provide media training to improve electoral coverage.

-- NDI also has helped create a proposal to publicly fund political party and coalition campaigns. Signed by 28 of Mauritania's 35 political parties, the proposal, which the Ministry of Interior is currently considering, establishes requirements each party or coalition must meet to be eligible for public funding.

-- NDI reps said that following the March 2007 presidential elections they are interested in assisting in democracy stabilization efforts such as "civil-military programs to try and reduce the distance between these two groups."

(C) Comments

-- NDI continues to lead the way here in helping political parties and civil society prepare for elections. In fact, they are one of the only bodies working with these key groups.

-- Elections here that meet international standards are still far from certain, and they will only be the first step towards sustainable democracy. NDI realizes this, and their thoughts about future programs, including in the civil-military realm, are important.

-- Embassy strongly supports NDI's ideas about combining Embassy programs such as TSCTI, with NDI's own programming. It is not too early to start thinking about what the USG should do after the elections.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (U) On May 30, National Democratic Institute (NDI) North African Regional Director Gerard Latulippe and recently arrived Resident Director Jacques Veilleux briefed Ambassador

on the status of NDI's efforts to help Mauritania prepare for elections.

NDI'S PROGRAMMING

¶2. (U) NDI sponsored a Women's Forum May 30-31 to promote the role of women in the transition to elections. Ambassador gave a speech in classical Arabic during the opening ceremony of the event which attracted more than 200 political party and civil society representatives. Following the event, participants adopted several resolutions for enhancing women's political involvement and established a "National Consultation Platform" which will meet regularly to encourage further discussion of these issues.

¶3. (C) Following the success of the Women's Forum, NDI has worked with forum participants to create an advocacy strategy, to ensure that parties' candidate lists for the coming elections ensure women's representation. The transitional government has said it will require political parties to ensure that at least 20% of their candidates are women, but they have not yet created a mechanism for ensuring this. Latulippe said "it is unlikely the government will be able to guarantee that 20% of the Parliamentary seats go to women...either because they will not set the proper party guidelines, or because the parties won't follow them." Latulippe added that "this is why we will target political parties themselves, to try and guarantee improved representation for women."

¶4. (U) In the coming months, NDI will focus on enhancing political parties' abilities to mount successful campaigns.

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"We want to organize candidate debates, and have these debates broadcast live to the Mauritanian public," Latulippe said, adding that "this will educate the public about the elections and will encourage parties to develop competing and substantive party platforms." NDI also plans to provide election monitoring training to political parties and media training to Mauritania's public and private media to encourage "objective and comprehensive electoral coverage."

¶5. (U) NDI continues providing political parties material assistance and training through their Nouakchott Resource Center.

28 POLITICAL PARTIES SIGN PUBLIC FINANCING PROPOSAL

¶6. (C) Over the past four months the Ministry of the Interior has repeatedly requested public financing proposals from political parties, saying that if the parties do not agree on a plan, that the government will not provide public funding for parties. Responding to a lack of party coordination and a call from the Ministry for assistance, NDI gathered together 28 of Mauritania's 35 recognized political parties to agree upon a proposal (according to NDI the 7 missing parties were either "non-existent or unreachable"). Following several days of negotiations, the 28 parties agreed on a public financing framework and submitted this to the Ministry in mid-May. The Ministry has not yet responded to the proposal.

¶7. (C) The public financing proposal includes money for political parties and coalitions, but not for independent candidates. The proposal establishes several requirements parties or coalitions must meet in order to receive funding, such as candidates running in at least 40% of Mauritania's electoral districts, at least five regional offices, and a bank account.

Programming after March 07 Elections

18. (C) Responding to Ambassador's question about NDI's plans in Mauritania following the March 2007 presidential elections, Latulippe said "we have already begun looking at several options, including programs with the newly elected Parliament and civil-military programs to try and reduce the distance between these two groups." Ambassador proposed that NDI and the Embassy continue working together, particularly on the civil-military front. "I see several partnership opportunities," Ambassador said, adding that "TSCTI is one possibility."

FUNDING

19. (C) Latulippe thanked Ambassador for "all of your work in pushing for funding," and said that there current funding position was favorable. Latulippe said NDI was currently operating on bridge funding from a National Endowment for Democracy (NED) grant, but was expecting an additional 120,000 dollars from NED, 250,000 dollars from USAID, and 500,000 dollars from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Latulippe said that once these funds arrived "we will be in a very good position to carry out our programming goals."
LeBaron